

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 7095

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Barbecue Hall of Fame member Desiree Robinson.

WHEREAS, it is our privilege to recognize those Tennesseans who have reached the pinnacle of culinary excellence, bringing great pride and acclaim to this State; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Desiree Robinson, a pitmaster of the highest order and longtime owner of the legendary Cozy Corner Restaurant in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, Mrs. Robinson was inducted into the American Royal's Barbecue Hall of Fame, becoming the first African-American woman to earn this honor, a testament to her singular talent and steadfast commitment to her craft; and

WHEREAS, born in 1937 in Lexington, Mississippi, Desiree Robinson moved to Memphis at the age of five and attended Manassas High School, where she met her future husband, Raymond Robinson; and

WHEREAS, the couple first got into the barbeque business in Denver, Colorado, where Raymond Robinson, discovering there were no good barbecue restaurants in town, started cooking his own on a backyard barrel smoker and ultimately launched his eponymous restaurant, Ray's Barbecue; and

WHEREAS, after a few years, the Robinsons returned to Memphis, where they found a recently shuttered, fully equipped business at 754 North Parkway with a rare glass-walled, Chicago-style aquarium barbecue pit; they opened Cozy Corner in August 1977; and

WHEREAS, for the restaurant's first quarter century, Desiree Robinson's contributions were primarily in the background, providing financial support for their family of four, including children Ray Robinson, Jr., and Val Bradley, by working at South Central Bell; and

WHEREAS, after Ray Robinson's death in 2001, however, Mrs. Robinson stepped up to keep the family business running, quickly becoming the public face of Cozy Corner—chatting with customers in the dining room and making sure everything was done up to her late husband's standards; and

WHEREAS, although her husband did most of the cooking while they were married, Desiree Robinson had a talent and passion for it, as well; she started preparing family dinners when she was only eight years old, preferring to cook at the stove while her friends were out playing. In college, she majored in dietetics, now known as nutrition studies; and

WHEREAS, for the first few years after taking the reins, Mrs. Robinson was often seen tending the big aquarium pit behind the front counter, until the pit was rebuilt in an outbuilding in 2016 to meet stricter fire codes, all the while creating Memphis-style barbecue with a few unique Cozy Corner touches; and

WHEREAS, under Desiree Robinson's leadership, the restaurant went from a neighborhood favorite to a nationally known barbecue destination, serving up sliced smoked pork piled high on hoagie-style rolls, smoked Cornish game hens, and smoked bologna sandwiches; and

WHEREAS, although she now spends most of her time with her grandchildren, Mrs. Robinson is still a regular at the restaurant, which continues to thrive under family leadership and will continue the family's legacy of serving exceptional barbecue for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, for more than twenty years, Mrs. Robinson has been the heart and soul of the Cozy Corner Restaurant and an icon in the world of barbecue, and she is most worthy of our approbation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF

REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we recognize and honor pitmaster and Barbecue Hall of Fame member Desiree Robinson, extending our gratitude for her culinary contributions to this State and our best wishes for continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.